

Religion and Culture

REV. JOHN A. MCCLOREY, S.J.

An address given on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Creighton University, Omaha. Reprinted from the Creighton Shadows, November, 1928.

CULTURE may be defined as natural refinement, humane development, the expansion of our mental, imaginative and emotional faculties. It is refinement of mind, keenness of intuition, breadth of view, depth of reflection, saneness of judgment, exactness, clearness, swiftness of deduction, solidity of mental principles, tenacity and capaciousness of memory, splendor of imagination, quickness of wit, vivacity of fancy, warmth of emotion, delicacy of instinct, correctness and nicety of taste; grace, dignity and ease of deportment, eloquence of speech;—in general, culture is that assemblage of intellectual and esthetic qualities which constitute the lady or gentleman.

Now it must be evident in the first place that culture thus described—something, namely, quite distinct from morality—is an excellent thing, worth having for itself. Even if there were no heaven to be won, no virtue to be practised, no morality to be acquired, no commandments to be kept, even if everything were to end with death, culture would be worth acquiring and preserving. For surely, aside from any question of morality, a clear mind is better than a dark one, warmth of affection is preferable to insensibility, a good memory is more desirable than a poor one, grace of manner is better than boorishness, social amenities are better than social aloofness, and power of expression is better than poverty of speech. I do not say that culture is the best thing in the world; morality is better; religion is better; common honesty, laboriousness and diligence are better; but I do say it is very good.

CULTURE AS A MEANS TO MORALITY

It is good in itself; and it is good as a means (though not as a sufficient means) to morality. For clearly (all

other things being equal) the better a man's mind, heart and imagination are cultivated, the better he ought to be morally. I do not say: The better he is; but, the better he ought to be. Surely the faculties given us by God have not been given us in vain; but they would have been given in vain if they did not help morality; for morality is the service of God, which is the only thing in life not in vain. Culture, it is true, is not a sanctifier; but it is at least a civilizer; and civilization ought to be an ally of sanctity. A good natural education, like a good natural soil, ought to have a beneficial effect upon the seed of virtue. Therefore good breeding ought to help good living. Poetry ought to help prayer. Literature ought to help piety. Sociability ought to help a fraternal charity. A good judgment ought to help a good conscience. Refinement of manners ought to help refinement of virtue, and the very preoccupation of the mind with arts and sciences ought to be a means of excluding from it numerous immoralities. This ought to be the case; and it will be, so long as no adverse element interferes.

AN AID IN INFLUENCING OTHERS

And as culture lends itself to the personal morality of a cultured man, so it lends itself also and more powerfully to the moral improvement of those with whom he may have to deal. Brethren, you must be apostles—all of you—drawing your neighbor to a better life. Now remember that an apostle must be, as far as circumstances permit, not only a moral being, but also a naturally cultivated lady or gentleman. The grace of God is more excellent than the refinements of man; but the refinements of man are hardly less important in dealing with men. For while men of the world are too often blind to the loveliness of grace, they are keenly sensitive to the gifts, the accomplishments, the amiability of mere humanity. You may possess the purity of an angel and yet, if, through your own fault, you do not possess a corresponding purity of diction; you may have the grace of God in abundance, and yet, if through your own negligence, you have not a like grace of natural character, your influence for good upon the too natural world will not be what it well might be. If you were to approach pure spirits with pure spirituality, you would succeed with them but not with men. But if you attempt to draw men with the "cords of

Adam," with the silken cords of human amenities, numbers of them will first love your natural gifts, then your gifts of grace, and finally the Giver of both. Thus they enter through the door of nature and pass on and up to heaven through the portals of grace. Since, therefore, you are apostles, all of you, why not cultivate your natural powers according to your opportunities so as to increase your efficiency in dealing with the world?

VIRTUE ENHANCED BY REFINEMENT

The devil draws men to sin by the attractiveness of refinement; why should you not draw them to God by the same means? Men do not embrace sin for the sake of its ugliness, but on account of its fair natural disguise, and they will not readily accept what they think is the ugliness of virtue unless virtue be clothed in the same disguise. The difference, therefore, between an apostle of Christ and an apostle of Satan, ought not to be that the latter is naturally refined and the former is not. Both of them may be refined; the difference being that the one employs his accomplishments for the devil and sin; the other employs his for God. If we do not believe and act on this truth, we shall give worldlings occasion to imagine that all the human attractiveness is on their side and none of it on ours; that they, forsooth, are to go through the world arrayed in purple, crimson and gold; and the virtuous, in sack-cloth and ashes. Let us not mislead them. The poet says: "Beauty should go beautifully"; and God wishes that the beauty of virtue should be enhanced by the graceful garb of natural refinement.

CULTURE ALONE DOES NOT SUFFICE

But when we have said this much in favor of culture as an aid to morality, we have said all that can be said for it. It is an aid to morality; but not a sufficient aid. Something else is necessary.

It is not sufficient. For morality, in the present order of Providence, is supernatural, whereas culture is merely natural; and between the natural and the supernatural there is no proportion. By no natural means can we attain to a supernatural end.

But even for merely natural morality culture is inadequate. For it is certain that neither culture nor any other

means without grace, can enable any man to remain even naturally moral. Hence the plea commonly heard: "I don't need religion; I love my family, I pay my debts, I am good to my fellow-men; I have the right attitude toward God; what else is required? I can do all this without religion";—that plea is not founded on truth. For the men that make it are either secretly assisted by the graces of religion, without their knowledge, or they are not. If they are, evidently they rest on religion; if not, either they are not moral, or they will not long remain so.

WHY IT IS INSUFFICIENT

The insufficiency of culture for morality can be easily explained. For these two forces, culture and morality, are in two distinct spheres of activity. Morality is in the will; culture is in the mind. The object of morality is the good; the object of culture is the true and beautiful. Culture refines a man; morality makes him strong. Hence, a gentleman can be refined to the nicest point, without having a shadow of morality. He can be mentally exquisite and morally vile. He can be a paragon of culture and yet a degenerate. The fair lily of artistic and social refinement is sometimes rooted in a swamp of turpitude; nice manners often veil unspeakable corruption; elegant conversation often distils from leprous minds. No, the mind is not the will; culture is not virtue; refinement is not morality; elegance is not purity; mentality is not sanctity; good judgment is not a good conscience; clear, clean-cut thinking is not clean living;—refined instincts, delicate tastes, esthetic sentiments, graceful attitudes of mind, social finish, quickness of perception and the other qualities belonging to culture, however sweet and amiable they may be, are distinctly quite a different thing from virtue, from morality. And it is well for us in cultivating them to keep in mind what they are, and what they are not; what purpose they serve, and what purpose they do not serve; to remember that they are graceful adornments of life; negative dispositions for morality but nothing more than that. And yet no heresy is more prevalent today than to mistake them for virtue; to-day, when in our literature, social life and on our stage (when it is not corrupt), humane accomplishments, refinements, finished manners, intellectual tone, are presented to us as being the sum total of things worth while.

NEWMAN AND JOHNSON

Once a lady said of Newman: "He must be a holy man." Newman heard of the remark and wrote: "Madam, do not mistake. I have had opportunities of cultivating my mind, but pray remember that mental cultivation is no guaranty for holiness." We ourselves, perhaps, have seen many a girl, gone forth into life from among the lilies, soon dragging her smirched skirts in the mire, because, forsooth, she trusted the safeguarding of her innocence to her natural refinement of instinct instead of setting herself down upon the firm basis of religion; and many a young man, leaving the portals of school and soon falling away from his high estate, because he trusted in culture instead of trusting in grace.

The Philosopher in Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*, said to the youth: "Study philosophy, young man, and your virtue will be immune from attack." Shortly afterwards the youth found the Philosopher in great distress. "What's the matter?" he asked. The only answer was: "My daughter, oh, my daughter; death hath taken her from me." The youth said: "But this is only one of the superficial vicissitudes of life; your deep learning ought to make you immune from grief." "Young man," he said, "of what good is my learning to me now? Can it help me to bear this crushing blow?"

No, brethren, it could not. And when grief, discouragement, temptations to sensuality, pride, anger, sloth, and hatred come upon us, culture is not a sufficient defense. When a man stands at the open grave of his beloved, his broken heart is not mended by estheticism. When a young man is being allured from a clean and wholesome life by the glamor of lasciviousness, something more than a sense of respectability is needed to check him. The equipment of social, literary, and artistic life are sufficient for fair-weather morality, but when the storm comes they are shattered to bits. We all have passions, and when the passions arise in their volcanic might, the whole exquisite fabric of cultural defenses breaks before their maddened rush.

CULTURE MAY BECOME AN ENEMY OF VIRTUE

But the insufficiency of refinement is not its worst feature. Refinement oftentimes becomes an enemy of virtue. Learning leads to pride; literature defies nature and hu-

manity; estheticism lies close to hedonism; refinement degenerates into effeminacy. How many philosophers there are, without purity! How many poets, without purity! How many artists, without manliness! How many gentlemen, who are not men! How many ladies, who are not real women! Has not history borne sad testimony that too often nations rise from crude ways to natural refinement and then sink to unnatural crimes? We know the depths of moral infamy to which Greece and Rome sank from the apex of artistic and literary excellence. And think of our country! We can remember ruder days; but these are the days of American wealth, luxury, social amenities, intellectual pretensions. God grant that we too may not go down from the crest of the wave into the trough!

RELIGION IN DESUETUDE

Religion has fallen into desuetude. The sensuous reject it because it is a curb to their passions. So-called intellectuals despise it because the evidences of religion have broken, so they think, beneath the pressure of modern science. Modernists drop it because its antique dogmas are out of joint with the times. Utilitarians decline it because it is not practical enough for the business world. Free-thinkers sever themselves from it because it puts a brake on intellectual independence. Numbers of sincere men have given it up in despair because it seems to be a shattered remnant of what it used to be. They look for union, and find it not. They listen for the Gospel, and hear secular discourses. They long for dynamic apostles, and are chilled by clerics, genteel but ineffectual. They are hungry for the meat of truth, and are served with the unsubstantial breakfast foods of personal speculation, private opinion, and political views. This, I believe, is a fair statement of the present-day attitude of multitudes toward religion and the Church.

There was a time when religion was a driving force in the world. Men and women laid down their lives for it, sacrificed fortunes for it, spread it enthusiastically, fought for it, drank it in with their mother's milk, saturated their minds and hearts with it, studied it deeply, knew the structure of it from cellar to roof, were comforted, warmed, and strengthened by it, heard its voice with respect and ate its truth as their daily bread. However much modernists be out of sympathy with the old-time followers of religion, they can-

not but admire apostolic men who, like St. Paul, St. Patrick, St. Francis Xavier, Jogues and Brebeuf, went to the earth's ends in poverty and hunger, with a flame in their heart and a light in their eyes, gladly leaving home and native land to preach the Faith; men of the desert, who, like, St. Anthony, lived in solitude with religion as with a bride; men of doctrine, who, like St. John Chrysostom, Nazianzen, and Ambrose, spent the best energies of their mighty intellects and gifted tongues to expound religion to the people and to defend it against its enemies; men of martyr caliber, who like Lawrence, Sebastian, Agnes, and Cecilia of Rome, like the Irish Plunkett and the English Campion, Fisher and Thomas More, met death with a laugh for religion's sake. Through the centuries thousands of such men and women have lived and died. Their devotion is a strong argument for religion. For they were not stupid nor effeminate nor unlearned nor fanatical nor out of touch with the world nor naturally callous to the attractions of earth. But they were normal men, red-blooded and gray-brained, convivial, fighters, thinkers, lovers of freedom; just as representative of genuine manhood and womanhood as we are today. Oh, how the skeptical thinking of modernists pales in comparison with their doings! One big deed is better than a thousand thoughts. For the chief criterion of value is not speculation, but action and sacrifice. The crimsoned, gold-flecked track of their passing is like the effulgence of the setting sun; while the feeble vacillation and unproven negations of doubting Thomases are as watery as the dead, cold moon.

IS NOT IRRELIGION A FAILURE?

Is religion a failure? That is a question we have heard frequently enough. I shall answer it. But before doing so, I should like to ask a question of my own; Is not irreligion a failure? Irreligion has been the boast of our day. The pre-War civilization of Europe was emphatically irreligious. Modern science scoffed at religion, and modern science was the idol of Europe. Darwin, Huxley, Spencer in England, Renan in France, Kant and Marx in Germany have been ikons of the century—and they were rationalists. Before them the French Encyclopedists ridiculed religion, and they are in honor even yet. Irreligion was going to renew the face of the earth, cleanse the world of superstition, and allow men to think for themselves—and it has made a

mess of things. Men did think for themselves, formulated their own rules of conduct and lived according to their own rule. They boasted that they had arrived at the acme of civilization, that cavemen had finally become supermen, that men whose trammelled reason had been unchained would use their reason to settle differences, that war was a relic of the superstitious past. And lo, the Great War came; Mars laughed at Athene, brute force clubbed reason, and blood instead of brains had to settle the argument. It is just possible, of course, that the sequence between the period of irreligion and the period of war was a mere coincidence, but it looks for all the world like a case of cause and effect. At any rate, irreligion did not save us from the War, and therefore it lies open to the charge of failure. Even its most enthusiastic defenders have been shaken in their faith—their faith in infidelity. They lie prostrate amid the charred ruins of a world—skeptical of their skepticism. They pulled down the pillars of religion with Samsonian rage, and now grovel beneath the fallen superstructure of civilization, with plenty of time to meditate on their foolhardiness.

And is not irreligion directly responsible for the War and for the subsequent economic chaos of today? Religion with its Creed puts graphically before the mind supernatural truths which uplift. Irreligion obliterates them. Religion with its Ten Commandments emphasizes the evil, offensiveness, guilt and punitive deserts of sin. Irreligion removes the emphasis. Religion through prayer and the Sacraments enriches souls with helpful grace. Irreligion closes the channels of grace. Religion sets before us the heroic proportions, alluring graciousness, and thrilling example of Christ. Irreligion erases Christ from the tablets of our memory, nullifies the force of hero worship with regard to Him and leaves us cold and untouched by His lessons of morality. Moreover, irreligion dulls the appeal of historic Christianity, abolishes the calendar of martyrs and saints, pulls down Heaven out of the sky, cabins us in with the horizon of earth, denies to broken-hearted humanity the hope of immortality, places us only a degree or two above the level of the beast which dies and, in dying, perishes utterly.

MAN WITHOUT RELIGION

Take religion from a man and place him on the plane of mere nature, and forthwith he will not see clearly what

he ought to do nor feel strongly the desire of doing what he ought. The sublimest intellects of antiquity, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, after the most exhaustive study of the natural code of morality, did not know at all some of the fundamental laws of life, saw other laws only dimly, and did not observe the few which they clearly knew. What must have been the darkness and weakness of the mass of humanity, since these outstanding men were so pitifully blind and ineffectual? Humanity needed religion for its illumination and strength; we need it today and we are starving our need by an irreligious life. We are all aware of the depths of immorality, cruelty, and misery to which the pre-Christian world had descended. Christ healed the world. Like the Good Samaritan, He found man prostrate, wounded and all but dead on the road of life. He stooped over him, pitied him, poured oil into his wounds and put him on his feet again. True, the Christian era has not been altogether a heaven on earth; but in comparison with pagan days it has been a blessed time. Do not point out to me the classic refinement of Greece and the military splendor of Rome. For the masses of Rome and Greece were corrupt in slavery, and the leaders were as depraved as they were gifted.

Do not tell me that we of today, without religion, are not so badly off. That view would have had some plausibility before the War. But it has none now. For we could hardly be worse off than we are. But even before the War the view was only plausible, not true. For the accumulated force of 2,000 years of Christian morality cannot be shuffled off in a day even by those who have rejected Christianity intellectually. The force of habit is strong; we have become habituated to Christian ethics; custom has inoculated the world with the saving serum of Christ. Rationalistic nations are still profiting, though unconsciously and thanklessly, by the moral maxims of a religion they have rejected. Even after the sinking of the sun the sky is luminous. You say that the sun of Christianity is down and that life is still lightsome! Wait awhile and complete darkness will fall! Give rationalism and naturalism time to obscure the heart of man as they have already obscured his mind; then you will know by experience how black is the night of irreligion. The times are not bad enough for you? Be patient! There are worse things ahead! Worse things ahead unless religion be restored to its place.

IS NATURE SUFFICIENT?

One of the most plausible arguments against the necessity of religion for the purposes of life, is that human nature is sufficient unto itself. We hear men say: "Human nature is adequate for the attainment of its own ends—without supernatural aid. Reason is king in the kingdom of man and is capable of ruling well, without religion. A normal government has within itself all the means requisite for fulfilling the purposes of government. If a machine is well built, it works. Why, in like manner, cannot human nature work all right by its own intrinsic power? Why introduce religion from outside to assist it?"

Brethren, if human nature were in a normal state, all this would be true. But if it is subnormal, evidently all this is not true. If a man's constitution is subnormal through sickness, his constitution is not sufficient for itself—it needs a doctor. Now one of the gravest and most common mistakes of history has been the assumption that human nature is normal. Human nature is not normal; and the most ordinary observation shows us that it is not. What has history been if not a record of wars, sin, discord, suffering, sickness? Do not cynics say that the God who made our world is either very unwise and impotent or very cruel;—very unwise and impotent if not cruel; for who could not have made a better machine than the machine of human society? Very cruel, if not unwise and impotent; for if God could have made a better world, the reason why He did not was because He is a malignant deity who wished to spite himself on humanity. Their contention is not true; but it implies their belief in the abnormality of the world.

OUR NATURE A FALLEN ONE

The philosophers of pagan Greece and Rome saw clearly that there was something essentially out of gear in the human race; and they argued from the universal decadence of society that society had been mortally wounded in its inception; that the head-waters of the stream of life had been poisoned. Why, they asked, is irrational and inanimate nature so beautiful and orderly? The sun rises each day, pursues its course, and sinks in the west without fail. Stars circle in their fixed orbits harmoniously. The seasons

follow one another in orderly succession. Fields produce their crops and fruits, with only occasional floods. Oceans swell and sink rhythmically, with only occasional storms. Flowers bud, bloom and then reign in their many-colored and fragrant glory for their allotted time; then only do they wither and die. Cankers sometimes eat at the buds; but these are exceptional. Why is the world around and beneath man so beautiful and orderly, whereas the nature of man is generally awry, out of joint, defaced with the manifold ugliness of mutual hatred and uncleanness? Why do men fling art, science, culture, civilization, decency, family love, domestic peace, civil concord, and international amity to the winds when their passions are up, when their ambitions are stirred and their selfishness is roused? Why has the earth become a charnel house and a brothel? Oh, there are good people, thank God! But how few! And what heroic efforts the few have to make, to become and remain even passably good! We have got used to our crippled condition; we are bravely optimistic and accustom ourselves to our deformities. But if we take an unbiased view of life, must we not admit that life at best is a makeshift, that hours of happiness are few and brief, that falls are frequent, that our tendency downward is as pronounced as the gravitation of a stone; that if we stand, we stand with an effort; and if we drive forward and upward, we are all the time keenly conscious of the pain of the ascent? And who would call this constant struggle a normal condition of life? Is it not evidence rather of a misplacement and disjointing of the essential constituents of life? We might expect chaos in the jungle. But that man should so habitually fling reason to the winds, sacrifice purity to lust, belittle love for his fellow-man, mutilate works of art, burn smiling fields, wreck homes, tear down governments, dot the ocean with iron monsters of destruction, and pride himself on his scientific power of destroying life with engines of war—all this is monstrous and would be unbelievable if we did not know it to be a fact.

And are we not all dimly conscious of a lost Eden? Do we not realize that we are not what we ought to be, that there must once have been a sweeter existence, from which we have fallen; that there must have been some great sin committed somewhere, sometime in the past, which wrecked a happy world and made the earth a scene of desolation and

a valley of tears? Yes, even unilluminated reason indicates that we are a fallen race; and the dogma of religion that we have been cursed in our first parents is only a clear revelation of what we could have guessed without having been told.

Therefore, since human nature is subnormal through the disease of sin, there must be a super-normal power called religion, which can raise man from the depths to the plane of normality. And since Christianity is the only religion of which there can be question among Christians, Christianity is necessary for the purposes of life.

The Church and Modern Life

MSGR. JOHN F. SULLIVAN, D.D.

A radio address given at Providence, R. I., December 15, 1929. Reprinted from the Providence Visitor, December 20, 1929.

ACCORDING to their different points of view, many people form various ideas concerning the Catholic Church—peculiar ideas, which come from imperfect knowledge. In the judgment of some, she is a tyrannical autocrat—or a scheming political machine—or a teacher of out-of-date doctrines—or a mere producer of theatrical display. She is none of these. She is the loving and beloved Spouse of the Son of God. She is Christ's Kingdom on earth; and she honors her King.

Every morning throughout the world, she offers His Holy Sacrifice. We call it the Mass. Every hour in the day she converses with Him in her public prayer, the Divine Office. She educates her children to know Him, to love Him, to serve Him. In times of persecution she has shed her blood for Him. Her missionaries travel to the ends of the earth to spread His holy Faith. Yes, she honors her King, and she strives to bring all men into His Kingdom. She is His Standard-bearer in matters of Faith; she is the teacher of the world in morals—for she was instituted by the Son of God, not only to proclaim His Faith but to teach His law. She is the world's guide to the highest form of civilization—to right conduct and right living. And never, in all the history of the world, was her guidance more needed than it is at the present day.

COMBATING PAGANISM OLD AND NEW

Look over the past centuries of Christianity, and you will see what she has accomplished. The Church and the world have passed through two great epochs—and at the present day they are passing through another. The first two stand out like giant landmarks, each momentous in its importance for the destinies of the human race. The first was the era of the mighty Caesars, of world-wide paganism and debauchery; and it ended in the triumph of the Church and the Christianizing of the Roman Empire. "The blood of

martyrs was the seed of Christians." The second was the conquest of the barbarian world. The savage northern hordes swept like a tidal wave over Europe—and the Church converted them and civilized them. The third epoch is before our eyes; and it bids fair to be the most difficult and the most disastrous of all. The modern world is an orgy of "materialism," far worse than the paganism of other days. It has attained to a wonderful degree of so-called civilization—but it has drifted away from religion and from God. It concerns itself only with material things—living according to the old hopeless pagan motto: "Let us eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

A "new paganism" pervades our world today. The idea of God, of His justice and His mercy, has largely faded from the modern mind. It does not know whether He exists or not—and it does not care. And when there is no real belief in God, it is hard to expect real morality. Why should a man strive to serve a Being whom he knows not, who may not exist at all? Why should he seek anything higher than worldly success and the gratifying of his appetites when he has no belief in future reward or punishment? Why should he sit in church and assist at the worship of God when God is to him only a name? And so the world today is a world that does not go to church—except the Catholic part of it. We will our churches, four or five times each Sunday morning—and ours is the only Church that is able to do so.

Yes, we hear much of the glories of our age. No age so great in invention, none so wonderful in accomplishment; no age so efficient in healing, none so rich in comfort; no age so exquisite in its art, none so marvelous in its science; no age so terrible in war, none so prosperous in peace; no age so zealous for education, none so eager for civilization and freedom.

Yes—and should we grant all that, we must add: No age so godless! The modern world seeks all material power and progress that can be used for profit, for worldly success, for pleasure. But the reverence for God's Word, the love of God's worship, the beauty of chastity, the heroism of humility—these are gifts and graces not of earth but of Heaven. To these the modern world is blind. The wise men of our age see in space no more than countless myriads of stars; of Him who made them they know noth-

ing. In death they see only the destruction of things no longer useful—not a passing to a new life that shall never end, the union of man's soul with its Creator. In life they see only "the survival of the fittest"; the brain is only a machine, the soul a phantom, religion "the baseless fabric of a dream," and man the progeny of the ape.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

And so, they say, of what use is religion? It hampers progress; it hinders man from enjoying and improving his material interests, the only ones that matter. But, emphatically, they are NOT the only ones that matter! We must not subordinate the higher things to the lower. There is a God, who made us; and He exacts from each of us faith and love and obedience and worship. Each of us has a soul, that can be saved or lost; and the saving of that soul is the most important thing in this world and the next, for you and for me. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?"

How shall we learn how to save it? By religion—the science which teaches us our duty to God, who has created and saved us. Religion is God's truth and God's law revealed to men, setting before them their duties to Him and to their fellow-men. And the chief exponent of religion in the world today is the True Church of God—One, and Holy, and Catholic, and Apostolic. That Church has been the savior of the world in the past. She will save it again. She is God's Kingdom, fighting for her King—uncompromising, uncontaminated, the teacher of the world.

Has she ever compromised with evil? Never. Has she ever changed in one iota a single article of her Faith? Never. Has she in any way altered her rules of morality and right living? She has not. Does she, in all things, stand exactly where she stood a hundred or a thousand years ago? Precisely. Has she become an antique, an out-of-date organization, priding herself merely on the history of the past? Far from it; she is the strongest power for good in the world today. Through all her nineteen centuries she has been teaching the glorious Faith of Christ and the unchangeable moral laws given to man by God. That is precisely what she is doing now; and no other teacher can do it so well.

The paganism of today has no concern about God, and little respect for His law. It bases its beliefs on futile and uncertain sciences which change their teachings from year to year. Alleged "scientific experts" are proclaiming the news that there is no God, that the Divinity-idea is a myth. This twentieth century is "an Age of Science!" Ah, yes; wonderful discoveries are being made—and other discoveries are claimed that were never made at all. The chemist dabbles with test-tubes and alkalis—and then announces that he has found no need of a God! The geologist who has become infected with the evolution-idea unearths a fragment of prehistoric bone—and boldly declares that our human race (the race of Homer and Vergil and Milton and Shakespeare) is the offspring of a gorilla, with a more remote ancestry going back to the lizard and the jellyfish! Yes, the twentieth century is indeed an age of science! State anything, claim anything, and a part of the world will believe you. Much of our present-day science consists of baseless conclusions and fantastic absurdities.

Who are waging this warfare against God? Socialists? No. Anarchists, or Bolsheviks? No. These matters are taught in the classrooms of many of our famous colleges and universities. And what is the result? The misguided youth who listens to and absorbs such falsehood becomes, in his own opinion, a man of superior wisdom—emancipated from the thralldom of superstition; and his college career usually ends in the destruction of all religious faith.

NO CONFLICT WITH REAL SCIENCE

Our Catholic Church has no fear of science, nor of its discoveries. She knows that "real" science cannot impugn her position in dogma and morals. She herself has been teaching science and producing scientists for 1,900 years. And she knows that history (true history, not the clever network of lies which often goes by that name) cannot bring any great discredit on her fame and her teachings. The history of the last nineteen centuries is largely the history of Christianity; and remember that for fifteen centuries out of the nineteen, Christianity was merely another name for the Catholic Church.

A faulty system of education is undoubtedly responsible for some of the world's paganism at the present day. In

education we need three factors—the “home,” the “school,” and the “Church.” We need the influence of the home, the efficiency of the school, and the spiritual training that only the Church can give. And this is precisely why our Catholic Church insists on maintaining schools and colleges in which a course of thorough religious and moral instruction is combined with a high quality of secular education, and in which loyalty to country, to Church and to God are taught every day. Such is her antidote to irreligion and unbelief. After all, doesn’t it sound sensible and practical, and praiseworthy?

“No faith, no morals!” The world, the flesh and the devil are working today with amazing strategy and success to degrade mankind. They are using many means. The average play in our theaters—what is it? The “eternal triangle”—the man, the wife, and the lover. The latest development, the “talking movies,” has often a dialogue that is as suggestive and as foul as the pictures. The world is flooded with books, “best sellers,” that are vile, that cater to the basest of human passions. Sexuality is set forth in vivid colors, and is openly advocated—“companionate marriages,” “trial marriages” call them by any nice name you wish; they remain nasty!

MEETING MODERN EVILS

I can only refer briefly to a few of the present-day evils. Some of them will be treated more fully later on by other speakers. The mighty evil of divorce stalks through our land with a sword that cuts at all the ties of decency, menaces the home, destroys the family, deprives children of parental care and guidance, and leads to a “successive polygamy” worse than that of Mormonism. It is disrupting the fabric of Christian civilization before our eyes. The home is going; marriage has become a joke; one marriage out of every six ends in the divorce court.

“What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.” We Catholics are proud of the fact that our Church has always been the foe of divorce. Four hundred years ago she lost one of her fairest kingdoms because she refused a divorce to a lecherous king. She is the champion of the home, the guardian of childhood and womanhood, the sanctifier of the love of husband and wife. There never has been and there never will be any divorce in the Catholic

Church. A valid consummated marriage cannot be dissolved except by death. Yes, this law may seem severe—but you need a drastic cure for an epidemic.

Just a word about another evil in our modern world—the so-called birth control. You know how insidiously it is taught and how widely it is practised. There are sinful forces at work today, forces as lying as Judas, urging women to sell their privilege of honorable motherhood—to use criminal means to avoid the bearing of children. They advance plausible arguments—"greater leisure" (which means laziness)—concern for the poor, "fewer children and better ones," etc., and they are corrupting the hearts of woman-kind nowhere more than here in our own land. They call it birth control. What else can we call it? Race suicide. What did God call it? "The detestable sin."

How does the Catholic Church stand on this matter? She condemns it utterly—as she condemns everything that is contrary to God's law. Catholics who are habitually guilty of criminal practice to avoid parenthood cannot be partakers of Catholic Sacraments.

Let me speak briefly of another matter—an American matter; one of the marvels of the modern world. Let us call it "Pharisaism." You remember the Pharisee, the proud, pompous fool of the parable: "Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as the rest of men." That Pharisee is not dead; our land is full of them—forever concerning themselves with the personal affairs of their fellow-man—especially what he thinks; paying no attention to evils that are real and acts that are sinful, but condemning things that are not sins at all. There is an old axiom that "you cannot make a man moral by Act of Parliament"—no, nor by Act of Congress; nor even by attaching an Amendment to our American Constitution. I need hardly speak of the results. Does this preposterous law produce the desired effect, of rendering us more law-abiding, of making our people total abstainers from Maine to California? The question doesn't need an answer. A restrictive law is looked upon as a challenge, as something to be evaded. When there is a demand there is usually a supply—and lo! our vocabulary of slang has been enriched by many new words, the names of new trades concerned with law-violation—the "rum-runner," the "moonshiner," the "bootlegger," the "hi-jacker," the "speak-easy."

This queer feature of our present-day American law-code results from a mistaken and somewhat fanatical effort to do some good. Why do I discuss it here? Not to provoke an argument—but because I wish to emphasize the essential difference between the moral code of our world today and that of the Catholic Church. Her system of moral precept is founded on the law of God. She has always taught, for example, that excessive alcoholic drinking is a sin—often a grievous sin; but also, she has always held and holds today that such drinking, when not excessive or injurious, is not a sin at all. A rule based on God's law—and on good old-fashioned common sense!

The Catholic Church stands today where she always stood—the teacher of truth and law, the protector of the world's civilization. We Catholics are proud of her. We are proud that we are her children. And we hope and pray that, in our day as in the past, in the future as well as now, she may fulfil her destiny—to make mankind worthy of the love that brought God's Eternal Son into this fallen world of ours, that He might save and sanctify it.

A Word on Study Clubs

An editorial from the August, 1929, issue of The King's Rally, published by the Catholic Young Men's Federation, St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly, India.

IT may be of interest to our readers to point out that the "study-club" method which we have so often recommended in these pages as an effective means of knowing and appreciating the value of our religion, is not to be regarded as a sort of pious contrivance suited only to Catholic young men. It is more and more acknowledged to be a very efficient instrument whereby knowledge of a practical nature can be acquired, and convictions based on that knowledge can be formed and developed. Labor organizations of the militant sort both in England and on the Continent have their regular "study circles" and a variety of tracts, pamphlets, textbooks calculated to interest and win over the younger generations to their cause. In a different but still very practical direction, we found another proof of our statement in one of the recent issues of *Indian Finance*. Alluding to the Indian Institute of Bankers, started recently,

the Editor writes: "I would like the Institute to inaugurate a kind of 'study circle' and I would be only too glad to give concrete suggestions towards this end. One of our urgent needs is greater and more accurate knowledge in banking, financial and economic matters. Few people realize the woful ignorance prevailing in this country in regard to financial matters." And after giving some instances he concludes: "Anyway, the point I wish to urge is that the Indian Institute of Bankers would be doing a real service if they start a 'study circle' through whose means it should be possible to train a number of young men in a more comprehensive and a more correct understanding of economic and financial matters both in their theoretical implications and their practical applications."

Our readers will easily grasp the force of this exhortation, if they only substitute "religious" for "financial and economic" matters. Without questioning in the least the importance of studying economic problems, who does not see the far greater urgency of studying one's religion? The final statement of our financial observer is particularly applicable to our own interpretation: "I can think of no better motto for the Institute than these words from St. Matthew: 'Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.'"

No more apposite advice could be given to the members of our Catholic study clubs.